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BAN PLEA ON KILLER DOGS
By MICHELLE POUNTNEY

THE **RSPCA** today called for the extermination of all American pit-bull terriers in Australia after a frenzied dog savaged an elderly woman to death.

RSPCA president Hugh Wirth said the dog was bred to fight and until the breed was eradicated in Australia, attacks would continue.

"It is about time the Australian Government did something about **RSPCA** recommendations that the breed of US pit-bull terriers be compulsorily desexed to stop them breeding so they will eventually die out," he said.

Dr Wirth believed last night's tragic attack in Queensland was sparked by an innocent action by the victim that was misinterpreted by the dog, who switched into fighting mode.

Toowoomba police said the woman, 79, had driven to the MacKenzie St house about 6pm yesterday to check it was secure.

The owners of the home were on holidays and had asked the woman to watch the house.

Sgt Ian Hamilton said the woman walked to the rear of the house and the dog leapt over a 90cm fence and began mauling the woman's face, neck, right arm and leg.

A neighbor heard the dog barking and went to investigate. She tried to fight off the dog with a steering wheel lock but the dog turned on her, biting her hand.

She eventually calmed the dog and locked it in its pen before calling the ambulance.

Dr Wirth laid the blame for attacks equally on dog owners and the Federal Government.

The **RSPCA** put strong concerns to the Minister for Customs 12 years ago before pit-bulls were imported but Dr Wirth claims they were ignored.

"I am just so angry about it (this attack) because ever since we told the Federal Government what would happen, day after day we are confronted with these tragedies. "

He said that an English Act of Parliament to rid the UK of US pit-bull terriers failed because the dog was so entrenched there.

He estimated there were about 13,000 US pit-bull terriers in Australia.

"It has the basic instinct of a dog bred to fight, and just like an old human boxer that hears the round bell and comes out fighting, a US pit-bull terrier is easily turned on into fighting mode. "

Dr Wirth said the ferocious attack was typical of pit-bull terriers.

"Once in fighting mode nothing will stop them. "

He called for owners to be forced to keep the dogs under the most stringent conditions, and called for criminal charges and jail terms for owners of dogs who attack people.

"Until the owners of these dogs are forced to pay for the dog's actions you will get no change at all because people just laugh it (attacks) off.

"This dog is dead but it doesn't resolve the problem. "

Sen-Constable Steve Angus of Toowoomba police said the dog had been put down with the owner's permission, and at this stage there was unlikely to be any charges laid against the dog's owners.

Recent dog attacks in Victoria have included:

OCTOBER: Two **pit bulls** savaged a blue heeler cross in Flemington after allegedly escaping from their Ascot Vale owners.

JULY: **pit bull** shot eight times by police after it turned on an officer.

JULY: Nine-year-old girl bitten in face by newfoundland cross outside a fast-food outlet in Flemington.

JUNE: **Bull** terrier shot by police after it ran into Northcote house and mauled german shepherd puppy.

FEBRUARY: Police shot a **bull** mastiff after it allegedly attacked several people in Noble Park.

END OF STORY

Caption: THE TWO-YEAR-OLD DOG WAS DESTROYED. (COLOR).

Keywords: LIST OF DOG ATTACKS AT END OF ARTICLE

Section: NEWS

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